



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# Public Health Reports

Treasury Department, United States Marine-Hospital Service. Published in accordance with act of Congress approved February 15, 1893.

---

VOL. XIV.

WASHINGTON, D. C., JULY 7, 1899.

No. 27.

---

## UNITED STATES.

### REPORT ON THE SMALLPOX SITUATION IN DANVILLE, VA.

On June 17, a telegram from Dr. Paulus Irving, secretary of the State board of health of Virginia, stated that smallpox was epidemic in Danville, and requested that an officer of the Service be sent to direct affairs. P. A. Surg. C. P. Wertenbaker was at once ordered to proceed to Danville, and after a careful investigation of the situation, he reports as follows:

WILMINGTON, N. C., *June 25, 1899.*

SIR: In obedience to your telegraphic instructions of June 17, 1899, to proceed to Danville, Va., for the purpose of investigating the smallpox situation at that point, and conferring with the authorities, I have the honor to report as follows: I arrived at Danville on the afternoon of June 19, having stopped in Richmond en route to confer with the secretary of the State board of health. On arriving at Danville, I was met at the depot by D. A. Overboy, president of the city council, and Dr. Harvey, member of the State board of health. I found that the management of the smallpox situation had been delegated to a committee of the city council, who were acting in conjunction with the local health board. I was informed that there were 25 cases of smallpox in the city, all but 2 of them being in a portion of the city known as North Danville, and occupied almost exclusively by employees of the several cotton mills.

The disease made its appearance on May 31, 1899, in the person of a white employee of one of the cotton mills, the source of infection being Pittsylvania County, in the neighborhood of Ringold, a village some 10 miles from Danville. The disease was not at first recognized as smallpox, and the case was not isolated until after several other cases had developed among the employees of the mill. Efforts were then made to suppress it; patients and all exposed persons were quarantined, usually in

the same house; a compulsory vaccination ordinance was passed by the city council, and steps taken to erect a smallpox hospital and a detention house for suspects; as the mild type of the disease led to a doubt in the minds of many of the laity as to the correctness of the diagnosis, the secretary of the State board of health was called in. He promptly pronounced the disease smallpox, but still many refused to be convinced, and violently opposed vaccination. It was under these circumstances that the Service was requested to send an officer to determine the diagnosis and confer with the authorities. I visited the hospital and found therein 10 patients, all of them suffering from smallpox, 5 of them being nearly well, and the other 5 in various stages of the eruption, from the 5th to the 12th day. I also saw 11 other cases at their homes. They were all suffering from smallpox of a mild type. In the evening I met the committee and about 800 citizens who had assembled to hear my report and recommendations. A majority of those present were employees of the cotton mills and opposed vaccination, their opposition being due to ignorance of the subject. Many alarming rumors were afloat among them as to the evils following vaccination, so after reading my report I addressed them briefly, and attempted to remove these false impressions. On the following morning I met the committee, and we perfected the details of an organization for suppressing smallpox. I gave the usual advice of isolation, vaccination, and disinfection and discussed with them the details of each. I recommended the erection of a hospital and detention house for colored cases and suspects, no provision having been made for that class of cases, and thorough house-to-house inspection and vaccination throughout the entire city. All of my recommendations were accepted by the committee, and I was assured that they would be at once carried into effect.

As no house-to-house inspection had been made up to the time of my departure, it is impossible to say how many cases and infected houses there are in the city. I am of the opinion that a thorough house-to-house inspection will reveal a good many that are not now suspected, as rumors of several concealed cases reached my notice.

The conditions at Danville are unique, in the fact that a majority of the persons suffering with the disease are white. At all other points that I have visited, a large majority of the patients have been negroes. So true is this, that the disease is frequently called "nigger itch," and many persons believe that it can not be contracted by a white person. At Danville the conditions are reversed, but the disease was contracted from a negro patient. It is my purpose to revisit Danville within the next few weeks and note the conditions.

I am informed that there are some 80 or more cases of smallpox in Pittsylvania County, in which Danville is situated. I am now in correspondence with the county authorities, and have sent them copies of the précis on smallpox issued by the Service.

I am informed by Dr. Irving, secretary of the State board of health, that the smallpox conditions in the neighborhood of Norfolk and surrounding country are improving. This is doubtless due to the fact that in the hot weather the people live less closely together, and the infection does not spread so rapidly. I am of the opinion that smallpox is scattered along the lower tier of counties extending from Danville to Norfolk, and is frequently not recognized. It is my purpose to investigate this section at an early day. I rejoined my station on June 22, 1899.

Respectfully, yours,

C. P. WERTENBAKER,  
*Passed Assistant Surgeon, U. S. M. H. S.*